

CONNECTING THE PERRY SCHEME AND INTEGRATIVE LEARNING

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Assessing Intellectual Development

In the past two decades, there has been an increasing interest in assessment and instrumentation research on Perry's model (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Baxter Magolda & Porterfield, 1988; King, 1978; Mines, 1982; Moore, 1989, 1991). In Perry's original research (1970), and in early replication studies (e.g., Clinchy & Zimmerman, 1975), interviews were used to assess students' cognition. The original interview format used in the longitudinal studies at Harvard was almost completely unstructured by design (Perry, 1970). A number of recent interview studies have moved toward more structured formats than the earlier work (Belenky et al, 1986; Benack, 1982; Moore, Murrell & Graham, 1987; Slepitz, 1983). While interviews continue to be a rich and valuable means of assessing the Perry scheme, they are somewhat limited in their usefulness due to the complexity and costs involved. For that reason, almost all of the Perry scheme assessment projects done to date on collaborative learning environments and learning communities have used the *Measure of Intellectual Development* (MID), an instrument consisting of written student responses to an open-ended essay prompt (Knefelkamp, 1974; Moore, 1988a) and a well-established alternative to interviews. The MID must be scored by trained raters, but is still considerably less expensive for assessment purposes than interviews, at the same time retaining some of the open-ended richness of the interview format.

The traditional standard version of the MID is a single essay focusing either on the student's "best class" or "ideal learning environment." Most recently, the MID rating approach has been adapted to written student self-evaluations (Thompson, 1990) focusing on issues comparable to the ones produced by the essays. This work seems quite promising, and has led to a new essay prompt with a self-evaluation emphasis. Students are asked to respond to the prompt either as an in-class or a take-home assignment, with most students taking 25-30 minutes to write their essays. The MID is scored by raters who have trained extensively in the general Perry scheme and the specific rating process developed over the years by

Knefelkamp (1978), Mentkowski, Moeser, & Strait (1983), and the Center for the Study of Intellectual Development (CSID) (Knefelkamp, Fitch, Moore, & Taylor, 1982; Knefelkamp, 1974; Moore, 1987).¹

...As the following excerpts from MID student essays illustrate, there is considerable overlap between the hallmark themes regarding learning and epistemology reflected in the Perry scheme and the goals faculty have for collaborative learning environments:

*** student as active agent in learning/developing a "voice"**

The class demanded involvement which I think is very useful in the development of students. I found myself forced through involvement in seminar groups to be prepared to discuss and argue about the subject matter. Nothing could be as tedious and embarrassing as a room full of people with nothing to say.

...The seminars allowed for all participants to voice opinions as to what they each heard and received from the readings (books, poems, etc.). *There were discussions which allowed us to incorporate new ideas into our own.* . .

*** collaboration (learning in teams/groups)—development of empathy for "other"**

I equate the best class I've taken with the one I learned the most from. This would have to be the coordinated studies course from last quarter, Gods, Heroes and Humans. It was of a philosophical bent and was filled with new ideas for me and *a chance to learn from my classmates as well as from the teachers and authors of the texts...* Four papers (essays) and a mid-term and final exam were the biggest part of our grade, along with our performance in seminar. *Oh, yes, seminar was the valuable part where we were to try out our ideas on our classmates and exchange thoughts and criticisms to everyone's benefit. Without this part of the class, I wouldn't have considered it "the best class I've taken."*

I began the quarter with excitement and anxiety. I had been away from school for 14 years and wasn't certain what to expect. *I was immediately put at*

¹Further information about ordering information, rating costs, and instrument psychometrics is available from the Center for the Study of Intellectual Development (CSID), 1505 Farwell Ct. NW, Olympia, WA 98502, 360-970-1382 or 360-786-5094, wsmoore51@comcast.net, <http://www.perrynetwork.org>

ease when I saw the excitement and caring of the instructors who were to facilitate this course of study. As a class, we read together, discussed what we had read, we wrote together--we became a community of learners with a shared focus, that focus being to learn.

That course is over and I've moved on to other things but the excitement of that experience has carried on and I continue to grow as a student. Hearing an author's name--Baldwin, Kafka--reminds me how my knowledge has been expanded and it isn't just to get "the grade." *I'm filling with ideas that I have yet to sort out. But I'm filling!*

*** connection-making (between disciplines, between self and discipline)**

The best course I have taken, to date, is the coordinated studies course I was involved in last quarter. The course was a positive experience for me because I felt awakened to the purpose of education which to me is to develop a larger picture of the world I am in. *Through the combination of different subject matter toward the same goal I came away from the program with a sense of understanding of the subject matter that I would not have been able to achieve otherwise.* An example of this would be that through the reading of ancient Greek--through contemporary works that dealt with man's relationship to god/gods not only did I get an understanding of the cultures that the works related to, but also an understanding of the timelessness of mankind's search for spirituality.

...There were films, lectures and seminars, divided up between three instructors. The instructors' background and expertise were varied (English, computer, psychology). Each brought their own prejudices, but they were altered by the co-teaching situation. *Because of the varied backgrounds we were able to see the interrelatedness of the subjects in a way that would have been impossible in three separate classes.*

*** understanding context/developing perspective**

In the course of the quarter *I began to see some of my own biases toward linear thought, male dominance, and structured learning/teaching.* As a woman who has raised a family, having grandchildren, having worked in both large and small businesses, and also having done much to educate myself less traditionally, I found some of the limits of the class a real challenge. This was so good for me!! Rather than get the situation I wanted, I got instead a new impetus--a strong one--to go beyond the limits I perceived. This was also happening for some of my fellow students, especially the women who also found God to be feminine, found heroines

sometimes where there were no heroes, and found humans to be creative by nature rather than controlled or controlling.

While this was a wonderful opportunity for me to learn and a most conducive atmosphere in which to study with others, I still find myself chiefly responsible for my education.

*** critical thinking skills (analysis, synthesis)**

The class that qualifies as "best" would be the coordinated studies taught fall quarter dealing with the relationship between individuals and technology. There is no question in my mind about it being the "best" class I've taken. *It taught me to evaluate what I read, to listen to what is being said and to consider what is implied or assumed.* There was an openness in the class to new and old ideas. It was expected that if you took class time to talk you had given some thought to the idea, and therefore, the class was obligated to listen.